

Message Text

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17

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 /013 W
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P 290530Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3814

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TGEN, NP

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR PERMIT TO CLIMB MT. EVEREST

REF: KATHMANDU 5554 AND PREVIOUS

1. REV. FORD TELEPHONED AMBASSADOR FROM ANCHORAGE DECEMBER 27 TO EXPRESS HIS CONCERN OVER DELAY IN OBTAINING MFA DECISION ON HIS REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CLIMB MT. EVEREST. AMONG OTHER THINGS, FORD SAID THAT HE HAD NOT YET RECEIVED COPY OF EMBASSY'S LETTER OF ENDORSEMENT BUT UNDERSTOOD FROM "HMG OFFICIAL" THAT IT CONTAINED NUMBER OF LIMITATIONS AT VARIANCE WITH PAST EMBASSY PRACTICE. AMBASSADOR TOLD HIM THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE AND THAT HE COULD OBTAIN DETAILS FROM DEPARTMENT, SINCE HE HAD NOT RECEIVED FULL TEXTS OF LETTERS. FULL TEXTS, POUCHED EARLIER, HAVE NOW BEEN SENT DEPARTMENT TELEGRAPHICALLY (REFTEL). AMBASSADOR REQUESTS THAT DEPARTMENT CONTACT REV. FORD AND SUPPLY HIM TEXTS OF LETTERS ASAP. DEPARTMENT ALSO REQUESTED TO INFORM REV. FORD THAT FOLLOWING HIS CALL TO AMBASSADOR EMBASSY AGAIN DISCUSSED HIS APPLICATION AT SOME LENGTH WITH MOHAN PANDE, JOINT SECRETARY MFA IN CHARGE OF MOUNTAINEERING IN EFFORT TO OBTAIN EARLY DECISION. PANDE ASSURED US THAT MFA HAD NO DIFFICULTY WITH EMBASSY'S LETTER OF ENDORSEMENT WHICH, ASIDE FROM FINAL SENTENCE DENYING FORD EXCLUSIVITY OF DEPARTMENT ENDORSEMENT, DOES NOT DIFFER FROM PREVIOUS LETTERS.

2. IN DISCUSSION OF APPLICATION PANDE EXPRESSED SOME RESERVATIONS ON FORD'S QUALIFICATIONS, PARTICULARLY REGARDING HIS
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APPARENT LACK OF PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN HIGH ALTITUDE CLIMBING.

PANDE ALSO SAID THAT MFA WAS CONCERNED OVER SOLO ASPECT OF CLIMB, INCLUDING POSSIBLE SAFETY RISKS INVOLVED. HE PROMISED, HOWEVER, TO TAKE APPLICATION UP WITH FOREIGN MINISTER ARYAL DECEMBER 28 AND WAS HOPEFUL THAT FINAL DECISION WOULD BE TAKEN WITHIN 5-7 DAYS.

3. DEPARTMENT SHOULD ASSURE FORD THAT WE ARE DOING ALL WE CAN TO EXPEDITE HIS APPLICATION BUT ALSO MAKE CLEAR THAT, BASED ON MOST RECENT CONVERSATION WITH PANDE, IT IS BY NO MEANS ASSURED THAT DECISION WILL BE AFFIRMATIVE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT FORD HAS HIRED LOCAL ATTORNEY, A FORMER HOME MINISTER, TO REPRESENT HIM IN THIS INSTANCE. FYI: WE BELIEVE THIS TO BE SAME INDIVIDUAL THAT FORD REFERRED TO IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR AS "HMG OFFICIAL." WHILE WE HAVE NO REASON TO DOUBT SINCERITY OF THIS ATTORNEY, WE ARE DISTURBED THAT HE HAS APPARENTLY RAISED DOUBTS CONCERNING STRENGTH AND VALIDITY OF LETTER OF ENDORSEMENT. AS NOTED ABOVE, MFA OFFICIAL DIRECTLY CONCERNED ACCEPTS LETTER AS PROPER USG ENDORSEMENT, AS WE INTEND IT TO BE.

4. MFA IS CLOSED DECEMBER 29 TO CELEBRATE KING'S BIRTHDAY BUT EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR DECISION THIS WEEK.
CARGO

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